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ABSTRACT

Educational criticism, based largely on a paradigm of the arts, is an evaluation mode which relies heavily on metaphor, other tropes, and artistic language in general, to convey the quality of educational experiences. Recently educational criticism came under fire by Patton, largely for its use of metaphor which Patton believes the critic brings to the evaluation situation. After a general description of educational criticism, Patton's criticism of educational criticism is discussed and refuted. It is maintained that the metaphor is grounded in observation of educational events and in interviewing participants, which occur as parts of the data gathering stage of educational criticism. A stance that rides between etic (a situation in which the researcher enters the field with a previous, complete analysis of the categories to be used in gathering data) and emic (a situation in which the researcher adopts the terms, meanings, conceptualizations and categories provided by the natural participants) is necessary for educational critics as they use artistic language and metaphor to "plow the seas" of educational evaluation. (Author/BW)

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# EMICS, ETICS, AND METAPHOR IN EDUCATIONAL CRITICISM

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Educational criticism, based largely on a paradigm of the arts, is an evaluation mode which relies heavily on metaphor, other tropes, and artistic language in general, to convey the quality of educational experiences. Educational critics prefer to evoke the rich life of classroom experience rather than to bury it in the neutral denotative tongue which characterizes much educational inquiry.

Recently educational criticism came under fire by Patton (1980) largely for its use of metaphor which Patton believes the critic brings to the evaluation situation. In this paper, after a general description of educational criticism, I will discuss and refute Patton's criticism of educational criticism. Instead I maintain that the metaphor is grounded in observation of educational events and in interviewing participants which occur as parts of the data gathering stage of educational criticism. I propose that a stance paralleling Wax's that rides between emic and etic is necessary for educational critics as they use artistic language and metaphor to "plow the seas" of educational evaluation.

## EDUCATIONAL CRITICISM

Unlike most educational evaluation modes, educational criticism is based on an artistic paradigm. Aesthetic criticism (of cinema, literature, theater, television, and art) describes, interprets, and evaluates works of art and helps educate the perception of the reader or viewer. Likewise, educational criticism can help sensitize educators to possibilities they have never before considered. If it is assumed teaching is an art form, as many do (e.g. Axelrod, 1973; Eisner, 1963, 1976, 1979; Highet; 1950; Wissot, 1979), then the methods of aesthetic criticism can be applied to teaching. Educational criticism can be defined as a controlled form of inquiry which is based on lengthy classroom observation and which takes the form of portrayals of and commentary on classroom life. The inquiry must be based on the researcher's "educational connoisseurship"--a knowledge of the possibilities and alternatives in education which allows the critic to see, relate, illuminate, and render the classroom scene (Eisner, 1976, 1979; Green, 1978; Vallance, 1977; Willis, 1978; Donmoyer, 1979; Barone, 1979; Alexander, 1977, 1980).

The first stage of educational criticism--field observation-- necessarily precedes the written commentary stage. The fieldwork stage is based primarily on participant observation methodology derived from sociology and anthropology (McCall & Simmons, 1969; Pelto & Pelto, 1978; Spradley, 1979, 1980).

The second stage consists of writing the educational criticism. It is in the written product that this method differs from anthropological and sociological case studies. In the portrayal and commentary the

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educational critic attempts to use language and images in ways which evoke responses that differ from social sciences research--in a word, the critic attempts to be more artistic in the writing and thus to convey the quality of life in the classroom.

Educational criticism consists of description, interpretation, and evaluation or assessment. Description enriches the experiences for the reader--it renders apparent the qualities of the situation. Interpretations are then made based on education and social science theories. The final evaluation or assessment stage is primarily normative.

The metaphor of the puzzle could describe educational criticism. Critics attempt to solve the puzzle of determining what happens in classrooms or perhaps part of what happens. But unlike a jig-saw puzzle with five hundred white pieces, the classroom has pieces constantly changing in dimension and color. People move, react, absorb, reject, think, ponder, sit, withstand, and wiggle; they do a multitude of other things. But over a period of time patterns of events emerge from the puzzle and become visible to the observer. Events which initially appear ephemeral or fleeting assume a structure, coalescing into larger patterns which take on a life of their own. The differing puzzle pieces produce differing educational consequences for children, and the educational critic attempts to solve the puzzle or part of the puzzle.

## PATTON'S CRITIQUE

Utilizing Guba (1978) for his reference to educational criticism, Patton (1980) never cites Eisner or other educational critics directly while noting their connection to the Stanford Evaluation Consortium. Stressing the connoisseurship aspect of educational criticism, Patton contrasts the qualitative evaluator with educational critic:

> Where the qualitative methodologist seeks to understand the program in its own terms, the connoisseur searches for a metaphor to portray the program. Where naturalistic inquiry is inductive, the evaluator as critic is predisposed to look at a program according to standards of quality based on experience, reference group preferences, and comparisons with some Platonic ideal. The connoisseur has no commitment to produce a descriptive, holistic analysis that brings the decision maker into the program experience so that informed judgments can be made by those decision makers; the connoisseur's criticism and metaphors are both the data and the judgment. The danger of not clearly separating scientific inquiry using qualitative methods from evaluation connoisseurship based on the expertise of the evaluation critic may think that they have also experienced the rigor of the evaluation scientist; thus, they judge the potential of the latter by the performance of the former (p. 52).

Although there is room for disagreement on a number of the points Patton makes, this discussion will focus on the critique of metaphor and descriptive, holistic analysis.

From the description of educational criticism in the first section, it is apparent that Patton developed his critique without adequate knowledge of what educational critics actually do both in the field and in writing. Data collection for educational criticism usually

involves several months fieldwork in the evaluation situation. In art classrooms, in elementary classrooms, in gifted and talented classrooms, in high school English classrooms, educational critics collect data for future analysis. Data is gathered through observations, interviews, document analysis, etc.. And while still in the field the critic often attempts to describe the situation so that the richness of the data and the richness of the writing can be compared.

Analysis and interpretation are usually written after all data gathering is complete. However the critic still pursues the goal of description which evokes the situation. This goal is best achieved through the power of language. The critic utilizes the most powerful rhetorical vehicles--metaphor and other tropes--and grounds them in the educational situation under study. The metaphors emerge from observing, interviewing, and studying the situation and from exploring, perusing, and analyzing the data. The educational critic, who I maintain is one type of qualitative evaluator, seeks to understand the program in its own terms, uses those terms, but also, knowing the power of metaphor, especially root metaphor, attempts to metaphorize the program to convey the qualities of the situation.

## EMICS AND ETICS INEDUCATIONAL CRITICISM

Anthropologists assign the term "etic" to situations in which the researcher enters the field with a previous, complete analysis of the categories to be used in gathering data. The term "etic" is derived from the linguistic term "phon-etic." The logical opposite the "etic" situation is the "emic" situation (from"phon-emic") in which the researcher adopts the terms, meanings, conceptualizations and categories provided by the natural participants for their particular culture; the researcher subsequently uses these categories in collecting data. These two terms, based on the work of Pike (1954), describe different approaches to research. The etic stance is usually identified with scientific method and the emic stance with more naturalistic or qualitative research. In discussing the emic-etic stances, Wax (1971) maintains that a middle ground may exist where an outsider grasps the logic of the insider's configurations although the insider may not realize their existence. I propose that metaphor and metaphoric language may describe the insider configuration in a strong, compelling manner that helps the critic portray the situation. Much like Wax proposes a middle stance for the researcher in the field, I maintain that metaphors are tied to the natural setting by a simultaneous use of the emic and etic stance.

In my experience with writing educational criticism, the metaphors were grounded in specific data collection incidents, much like new notions and concepts are grounded by Glasser and Strauss (1967). In "Teacher as Shaman" (Alexander, 1977, 1981) the metaphor of the "shaman" was suggested by the students' cult- like worship of the teacher and was suggested by a student in an interview when the religious character of the experience was noted. Ritual sayings and ritual likes and dislikes played important roles in this particular classroom scene. The metaphor of "shaman" helped explain the religious fervor of the converts in the art history classroom. The teacher-shaman image also helped portray the teacher whose unusual ideas about teaching led to discom-

fort and problems among certain students. The classroom situation was described using the shaman metaphor as a vehicle. The worshipful, ritualistic attitude and activities of the classroom colored the interactions between teacher and students and among students.

"The Art History Cosmic Image Bus--Mr. Wand Our Tour Guide" (Alexander, 1977) necessitated a more metaphoric kind of description. Mr. Wand rarely (if ever) varied the format of his day so that the initial descriptive passage was relatively brief. Mr. Wand was known for driving the bus too fast--images flew by the window. This metaphor also evolved during an interview with a student. Although the initial descriptive passage had already been written in the main, the metaphor easily grew as its rhetorical power helped convey the emotional quality of life in Mr. Wand's cosmic classroom. However, short pieces of non-metaphoric description are interspersed as necessary throughout the interpretive and evaluative sections. Most educational critics would agree, I believe, that in addition to any single metaphor, more extensive data must be described so that consumers of educational evaluation can benefit from the educational criticism.

## METAPHOR IN EDUCATIONAL CRITICISM AND ITS RELATION TO METAPHOR IN GENERAL

A number of different kinds of scholars have studied metaphor from a number of different disciplines from many countries around the world (See Shibles, 1971, for an extensive annotated bibliography). Linguists, rhetoricians, literary critics, philosophers, psychologists, and anthropologists have explored the different aspects of metaphor to contribute to our understanding.

Linguists interested in metaphor attempt to define the nature of metaphor, discuss its use, and describe how tropes and metaphoric language function in contrast to other types of language (Ricour, 1977; Hawkes, 1972; Aarts & Calbert, 1979; Brown, 1958). Others, starting with Aristotle, in The Poetics and Rhetoric have attempted to define types of metaphor (Aristotle, 1946, 1968; Brooke-Rose, 1958). Aside from generally defining what critics mean by metaphor, this line of research generally holds less importance for educational critics. Sapir (1977), for instance, states that: "Metaphor states an equivalence between terms taken from separate semantic domains" (p. 4). Langer says "the principle of metaphor is simply the principle of saying one thing and meaning another, and expecting to be understood to mean the other" (1956, p. 23).

Rhetoricians pay attention to how metaphor functions in written and spoken speech which attempts to persuade. Rhetoricians' interest in metaphor extends to contextual issues and the power of metaphor (Booth, 1978; Barthes, 1970; Dubois et al, 1970). I have argued above that metaphor makes a powerful rhetorical vehicle. Metaphor persuades by helping the reader or listener to understand something in a new and compelling way.

Literary critics approach metaphor, particularly in poetry, with the idea of clarifying how metaphor forms the heart of poetic thought (Burke, 1950, 1966; Wheelwright, 1962; and Richards, 1925, 1936). Harries (1979) points out that use of metaphor in poetry and use of metaphor in the social sciences and philosophy differ fundamentally. He points out that transcendence of per-

spective allows a metaphoric vision of the world that is truly objective and transparent (p. 85). In anthropology, for instance,metaphors stand for cultures or capture certain notions within cultures (See Sapir and Crocker, 1977). This notion of metaphor is closer to the idea of educational criticism. The idea that a metaphor helps clarify the culture can be related to the classroom as a culture.

Philosophers are concerned with metaphor as a proposition or truth statement. Due to the "turning"(signifying turning away from literal meanings and toward figurative meanings) character of tropes in general, metaphor as truth statement has been debated for centuries (See for instance, Black 1962; Davidson, 1979; Levin, 1977). The educational critic believes that metaphors help truth prevail because they increase the readers' perceptions of the situation in question, thereby educating the reader. But philosophical notions of truth have distinct characteristics which are not helpful in analyzing the role of metaphor in educational criticism for the most part.

## AN EDUCATIONAL CRITIC'S RESPONSE TO PATTON'S CRITIQUE

Returning to Patton's original criticism, I believe that he places too much emphasis on the educational critic as connoisseur and not enough on educational critic as qualitative inquirer. The main differences I see between educational critics and anthropologists, for instance, are that 1) critics attempt to use more artful, metaphoric language because it is more difficult to "tune out," and is compelling and evocative, and 2) educational critics are more eclectic in their interpretations and assessments because they can draw on interpretive theories from a variety of different fields to fit the evaluation situation.

This poses a threat to the "social scientist" in two ways. First of all, metaphoric use of language runs counter to scientific use of language which by its very nature attempts to neutralize the inquiry results (the very term "results" is neutralized). Although many scientific breakthroughs have evolved through creative and metaphoric thought (Watson, 1968, for instance), the neutral stance which separates social scientists from the data also limits their language usage. In other words, scientists and social scientists use neutral, denotative language as an impersonal method to achieve a certain kind understanding among researchers and consumers of that research. Yet, what is conveyed in social science research often is devoid of the emotional qualities of the situation which would help the reader understand on a feeling level (Sherman, 1981). Usually, however educational critics and their readers find considerable agreement about the message that metaphor conveys which should allay some of the fears about the nature of metaphor and how it functions. Petrie (1979) suggests that the educative function of metaphor has been neglected by both teachers and researchers and allows connection to previous learning to occur. Since educational critics believes that much learning takes place through the particular, they maintain it is necessary to use language which best illustrates the particular. I want to suggest that metaphoric language opens the reader to reeducation of perception which cannot always be achieved through denotative language.

Second of all, the educational critics pose a threat because they do not attempt a holistic analysis using only social science concepts from one field. Instead literary concepts, anthropological concepts, or educational concepts might provide the foundation for an educational critic's analysis and interpretation. What the educational critic must do in his or her descriptive passages is convey enough of the events so other interpretations and assessments could also be made. Metaphor does not interfere with other possible interpretations and often an educational critic will relate alternative metaphors which were rejected because their explanatory power was weaker. This allows the consumer of educational research to apply alternative analysis to the description and data if desired.

In conclusion, I believe Patton's criticism is largely unjustified. First, metaphors help explain the data and make it more powerful. But like many anthropological metaphors, the metaphors of educational criticism grow out of a position which accomodates both the emic and etic stance. Second, the educational critic does not pose as a rigorous evaluation scientist because the notion of educational criticism is quite foreign to the notion of science; the basic premise of educational criticism lies in the artistic paradigm and aesthetic criticism. This is explained to the evaluation consumer at the outset so that the consumer's expectations fit the notion of educational criticism. The educational critic also performs holistic analysis much like the social scientist but believes that the evaluation can be conveyed to the reader through the medium of criticism consisting of descriptive passages, interpretation and assessment in which the critic develops a metaphor.

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